8/6/71

Dear Howard,

[illegible] returned from shopping. [illegible] that we are going to look at an old Lawrence Olivier movie shortly. So, not point in picking up the writing abandoned in the middle of a sentence, especially because at some point during the movie Jerry will pull in. There are several things to which I should have responded that, in haste to return to writing, I didn't.

You, or if you quoted him, Dick, are correct in your appraisal of WWII. Large parts were originally written as magazine articles at the request of the Wash. correspondent of Paris Match, who did ask at the request of a French agent friend, the agent doing nothing with them. Again, take it in context. That was completed before Lane's book was out, mostly written before Epstein's was. It represents the first plumbing of the Archives. But I think the pivotal question is suppose the criticism is valid, that the books seems like strung-together pieces, what is wrong with that? It is not presented as the new Shakespeare. The reaction to it remains good. It is still selling and people still write me nice comments about it.

PW is, largely, restricted to one subject because that is a comprehensible defect in the investigation and was, for the first time, a real focus on Rankin. From the time I wrote the introduction to the day I got the first 100 sewed copies off the bindery was 28 days. And look at that index! If did add, materially, to what was available. It did bring significant new things to light. You don't need three PhD's to understand it. Nobody has ever undertaken to make any response or refutation, or to ask for "new evidence" after it. Measure success as you will, it is a viable book and, like O in NO, added materially to knowledge. And both of these also were done before Sylvia's or Tink's were out.

There is a point in all of this. Everything I do is at the expense of something else. Therefore, I can do as Carrison does, spend hours whittling and honing a single paragraph, or I can ream the stuff out. I have made the choice, and I think both for me and for use it is the only choice. Time alone will tell.

Now there is no doubt the writing can be improved, by my taking more time with composing and editing and more, were it available, by others going over it. But I think you should now get a little introspective about your own reaction and see if it is not because, for the most part, you seek to impose your own tastes on how I write. My is unequivocally polemical writing. I make no apologies for it and believe none necessary. I will not take the take to simplify the syntax for those who will not read unless they can skim. This is not such a subject and those readers will help us none. People have to stop and read what I write. Despite what you say, a truly surprising number do. Nobody reads this subject for kicks or fun.

Remember Mao and the flowers. And even weeds can be pretty. It is in the eye and mind. But above all, remember that it is not like in shcols out of school, and those ivory towers aren't irvory any more.

My own belief is that mass education is having the effect of imprinting a single mass standard and taste in what is essentially an individual thing, writing. Maybe I'm wrong, but taste and standards have become so unvarying and acceptability so prised, I do fear it. My young niece has been getting a rough time from whoever it is in her school who has the special function of grading and criticizing themes. The kid has been frantic, for she has worked hard on them considered them pretty good, as did her college-graduate parents. There came a school competition. She picked out one she like, one of those most severely criticized. This time it was read bu someone else. So, she won first prize for the school where in grading it had barely passed.

On to Olivier!